

THIS IS OUR LIFE BY BARRY GIBB



Every week in FAB, Barry Gibb will be writing for you—telling you in his own words the behind-the-scenes story of The Bee Gees.

THERE we were, five Bee Gees, soaking up the atmosphere. And what an atmosphere! We stood bathed in spotlights on the stage of the atmospheric Albert Hall in London, peering out at a sea of around 7,000 faces making up a sell-out audience. Lots of faces behind us, too, belonging to nearly seventy members of a symphony orchestra there to accompany us!

I looked round at my kid twin brothers, and at Colin and Vince. All obviously knocked out by the excitement of this memorable evening. I felt like pinching myself just to make sure I wasn't dreaming. Because this evening, just a few days ago, was THE highlight of our career in pop as a group... topping even all the other highlights which have happened to us so fast in the last year or so.

And now here I am putting down on paper my memories and thoughts about HOW it all happened, WHAT happened, WHY it happened. Thoughts come scampering through my brain almost too fast to catch. Like getting my first guitar, as a Christmas present, from my dad—maybe the most important Christmas present I ever had.

But you see my brothers and I were lucky in having parents who loved music. That helps a lot. If you've got folks who don't care for pop... well, you're probably got a fight on your hands! Our dad was a drummer, a dance-band leader in his own right, and though he didn't want to force us into following in his footsteps, he certainly wasn't the sort to dissuade us. The Hughie Gibb Orchestra was pretty well-known on the ballroom circuits of Britain. For sure, lots of couples danced to his music, got that romantic feeling and eventually got married—and lived happily ever after, we hope! And now WE get letters saying how such-and-such a romance was started by boys and girls listening to one of our records. Gives us a nice warm feeling inside.

But hang on, I'm getting away from that first-ever guitar I handled. There was me, trying to figure out exactly how to hold the thing, and sort of feeling around for chords which didn't sound too much out of tune. Like most near nine-year-olds, I knew some of the pop songs of the day and so did my kid brothers, Robin and Maurice. Elvis Presley, Paul Anka, Tommy Steele—they were the big names who had the hits.

And as I struggled to make my fingers hit the right places on the guitar strings, the twins joined in. I'd say that this was the very first moment when we got that show-business bug. Somehow it came naturally to us, just falling into what sounded a not-so-bad harmony group. Maybe it's easier for brothers to make music together, even as kids... I don't know about that. We just seemed to get on like the proverbial house on fire.

So you can say that THAT is where it all started, just fooling around in our home. The year was 1956. Oddly enough, that was the year that a lad named Colin Petersen was making his radio debut in Australia and was making a name for himself as an actor by playing the lead in a movie called *Smiley*... a film we saw soon after it was released here. He was very good in the part, I remember. But of course I had no idea that in years to come he'd be joining the Gibb brothers as a drummer and mate—and touring the world with us! Just shows what a small old world it really is.

But I'm rambling again! Our own debut came that same year and it was what you'd call a rather insignificant appearance. In those days, the local kids went to special matinee shows at the Manchester cinemas on a Saturday morning. Before the films, the boys and girls would get up on stage and put on a sort of talent show in miniature.

We used to joke around about the "talent" unearthed there. But eventually we got around to thinking that it might be a good showcase for that brand-new close-harmony group, the Brothers Gibb. We went along, with some mates, to see the cinema manager and asked permission to take part. It took a lot of sheer cool nerve but we had plenty of that in those days—maybe more than we have now.

One record we wanted to mime to was The Everly Brothers' *Wake Up Little Susie*, but unfortunately I broke that! Result was that we decided we'd have to sing it 'live'.

Talk about chaos... but I'll have to save my talk about it 'til next week. Now I've got underway with my store of memories, I find it hard to break off. Cheers, then, for seven days!



Left to right: Vince, Colin, Maurice, Robin, Barry.